

# FREDDY KRUEGER UNMASKED

**A**ctors have created memorable cinematic roles for the past three quarters of a century, but few have been as memorable or popular as Freddy Krueger. Robert Englund's creation is undoubtedly the most sinister in cinema horror history since Colin Clive made a shocking revelation to Boris Karloff. As the fearsome leading man of the *Nightmare On Elm Street* thrillers, he has become an international phenomenon. "Audiences can't wait for him to appear in a scene because they know that's when the thrills really begin," said Robert Englund, who has brought the character to life, or should we say death - four times in as many years.

His latest effort, *A Nightmare On Elm Street 4: The Dream Master*, due on video this month, resurrects the boiler-room berserker for another nasty pass at the kids who survived his previous persecutions. Unlike his alter-ego, however, the man behind the mask has an explosively pleasing personality with a fast and funny sense of humour sharper than the Krueger kids talons. "My best analysis of Freddy is that he is the person you become when you are stuck in a terrible traffic jam with the windows rolled up, just after someone cuts you off and you wish leprosy on his first-born using words you'd never say in front of your mother. He's the profane stream of conscious ranting we've all wanted to let loose after being up to our eyes in incompetence. That's the mind

set I start Freddy at and go from there." Surprisingly the actor revealed his character was originally conceived as a large man with an evil presence who had no dialogue. In spite of this his casting agent suggested he audition for the part, Englund accepted the challenge knowing he was not who the film makers wanted. Dressed in black, his hair slicked back and a touch of dark pencil to emphasise the ominous circles under his eyes, the actor confronted skeptical director Wes Craven.

"They were looking for a giant stuntman, and I walked in," Englund recalled, "all punked out and wiry. Generally, you can hear my personality: I'm a motor mouth. So, as Wes told the story I stared him down, looking like I was going to bite his face off. I don't know exactly what convinced him, but I got the part!" *Nightmare On Elm Street*, released in 1984, immediately grabbed fans by their box-office lapels. It's box-office receipts totalled a surprising \$23 million. In October 1985, when the second instalment was released, grosses for that picture surpassed the original, taking the tally to \$53 million. The third chapter did a repeat performance with a \$45 million take, proof that the phenomenon continues to grow. So successful have been the *Nightmare* films, Englund and company spent the last half of last year invading the small screen with their special brand of

terror, *Freddy's Nightmares*, released on video in Australia this month in a series of eight feature length videos.

"Freddy appears in a number of episodes - but, you'll never know when! I'm working as both actor and director, including a voice over on every show. Such tampering with the audience may doom *Nightmare 5*, but, at this moment, that question is too difficult to address." Because the films are generally lensed





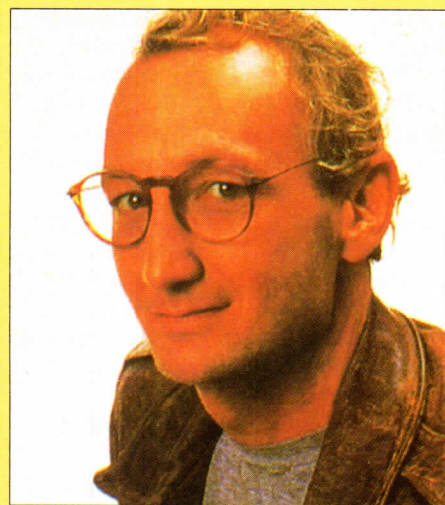


during the scorching California summers the actor spends weeks sweltering under the adhesive face mask which does things to his skin and disposition that he claims are unprintable here. Like Freddy, he continues to endure, even when his schedule exceeds the call of duty - such as when he was asked to shoot the Fat Boys video, *Are You Ready For Freddy*.

"I was so exhausted from *Nightmare 4*, I wasn't sure if I could get through the day - a video day is not like normal filming: they wanted to complete it in a single day! That's gruelling to begin with, but it wasn't me doing a single. Because there's three of them to hit their marks and make the right moves, it takes three times as long to do anything - three times as much work for

them and me!"

Hard work and lost sleep are nothing new to Englund, however, as he has created a successful career in TV, films and theatre outside of Freddy. His cinematic credits include *Last Of The Cowboys*, *Blood Brothers*, *Stay Hungry* and *Big Wednesday*, while he has appeared in such telemovies as *Hobson's Choice*, *Young Joe* and *The Forgotten Kennedy*. Additionally, he has performed in many a TV series, most notably as Willy, the amiable alien of *V*, and acted in more than 40 stage productions from Shakespeare to Shaw. Recently, he moved behind the camera to direct his first film, *976 - Evil*. His next film, being shot in Budapest, casts Englund as the Phantom of the Opera, in a remake of the 1925 classic. With or without Freddy, the actor has earned his celebrity status. "I guess my face has been recognisable for quite a while, although some people don't connect a name with it yet. Not everybody recognises me for Freddy. Actually, about 50% of the autographs I sign are still for old TV series' or a cable flick. It's turned out very nice for me." Englund may be overstating the pleasures of recognition, especially after a hair-raising incident that occurred during the shooting of *Nightmare 4* in San Pedro, California Park. During camera set ups, the actor - in full make up - chatted with curious children and bystanders, who learned the unit





## FREDDY KRUEGER UNMASKED (Continued)

would return the following day to complete the sequence. That night, the word spread like a canyon wildfire, and, when the company arrived the next morning, hundreds of anxious Freddy maniacs crowded the location. Seven police cars packed with uniformed officers were summoned to restrain the crowd and escort Englund to the set. A few hours later, when filming was completed, he returned to his caravan to discover the multitude had doubled - and was waiting for him.

Diving into the vehicle, Englund thought he was safe, until the throng climbed atop the trailer and began pounding on the roof!

Determined not to be cheated out of a personal appearance by their favourite razor-gloved man, fans surrounded the structure with the relentless enthusiasm of a lynch mob. Concerned about his safety, Englund developed a life-saving ploy; tearing off pieces of his mask, he threw them out of a window at one end of the caravan until there was nothing left to throw, then dashed out a door at the opposite end, racing to his own van which was parked nearby.

Though the actor was barely visible inside, the vehicle was immediately enveloped by the wild congregation, who began rocking it to the point of tipping it over. Police rushed in to quell the rioting fans, and escorted Englund out of the park - only to discover the exit blocked by dozens of cars. Realising he was trapped, he surrendered to the adoring horde, wearily signing hundreds of autographs before they allowed him to head home.

While Freddy continues his cinematic rampage, Englund is clearly having the time of his life fulfilling his artistic potential, in spite of incidents like that. "Sure there are films I'd like to forget, but I am savvy enough to know that there will be times in the 1990's when a Freddy marathon will play during a late show and I will look back saying 'That's what I did in the mid-80s'.

"I'm enjoying my 15 minutes of pop culture iconography, and often am reminded of it in the least likely places, an out-of-the-way diner or a third world automotive centre parts department. There's always somebody yelling 'Yo, Freddy!!!' to me."

- Eden Lewis

# Mr Nice Guy?

**In an exclusive Video International interview, Alan Alda talks to Ian Horner about his image, his Mr Nice Guy name tag, feminism, M\*A\*S\*H and his latest film, *A New Life***

Alan Alda hates being called Mr Nice Guy, he thinks it's disgusting. But he turns suddenly, and passionately proud when confronted with his feminist tag. He's vitally interested in what makes us tick, our dreams and what boxes us in, and this is the basis for his latest movie, which comes almost three years since his last film.

*A New Life*, written, produced and directed by Alda who also stars in it, has just been released on video by CIC-Taft.

By phone from Hamburg where he was promoting the movie, Alda told me about the agonies and varied ecstasies of his moviemaking, M\*A\*S\*H\*, feminism and that nice guy image. "I don't ever get tired of any reference to myself being a feminist because that means a lot to me and I am an active feminist and I am serious about it", he said. "It never occurred to me that it would lead to people calling me this disgusting thing of Mr Nice Guy, so, I guess until that blows over, I'm stuck with it. But it'll blow over eventually - people will find out what I'm really like.

"It's easy for a man to be a feminist because it's not necessary for him to understand a woman's mind. I don't think we were expected to. How can we be expected to know what goes on inside their minds when we don't even know what's going on inside our minds?

"Anyway, you don't have to read people's minds to behave in a decent way and to be fair with people. And it doesn't matter what the other sex is thinking, what matters is whether we are taking unfair advantage of them or not, that's all. We just have to worry about our own behaviour, in my opinion.

"*A New Life* is about how people

behave, how they let - or don't let - others take advantage of them. When I look at the movie I see people trying desperately to work with one another, live with one another, love one another and having a hell of a time not being able to, mainly because they see the world in different ways. Which is what I see when I look at us in real life, when I look around at the breakfast table or the dinner table and I see everyone of us having a different idea about reality, we all have fantasies that we pay attention to instead of each other. So who are the people on which Alda modelled his characters. Are they real people or ones created in his mind. "Many friends and acquaintances made it into the script but the film, by its very nature, is a contrivance and it's not easy to avoid looking and sounding like it.

"Before I start writing I have to think real hard about the characters and I think about real people that I know who would be good to see up on the screen. Not all the people we know are funny, some are just a pain in the neck, but I might think of two or three of the funny ones, say, and combine them in the one character and then I think of what actor could play that character. In this case I was very, very lucky that I got two or three of the actors I had in mind. I wrote the part for Ann - Margret (as Alda's estranged wife). I was very lucky that she wanted to do it. And I wrote the part for Hal Linden (as his best mate) with him in mind and I wrote the part for myself with me in mind and I was very lucky to get me, too". One, real life character in his previous film, *Sweet Liberty* (also CIC - Taft Video), was a nurse, a would-be actress who actually proffered her career resume, glossy photograph and job request to Alda